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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [AU](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN RESPONSE ON IRAN CIVIL SOCIETY AND
DEMOCRACY PROGRAMMING

REF: STATE 2659

ClassifiQBy: Economic-Political Counselor Gregory E. Phillips for
reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) On January 11, Acting Econ/Pol Counselor met with Helfried Carl, the MFA's Deputy Director in the Middle East and Africa Division, to outline USG democratization programs for Iran and to inquire about similar Austrian efforts. Carl welcomed the information, adding that it would be important to try to reach a broad section of Iranian society. Carl said that discussion of Iran at the next GAERC would go beyond the nuclear dossier to include democracy issues.

¶2. (C) Regarding bilateral initiatives, Carl noted that the MFA was considering an expansion of its cultural outreach via the Austrian Embassy in Tehran, pending the availability of funds. Carl added that Austrian efforts in Iran, and in the Middle East in general, would continue to concentrate on promoting dialogue between the West and Muslim nations.

¶3. (C) In Carl's view, the biggest challenge facing any democratization efforts in Iran is how to reach the general population, rather than "those whose hearts and minds we have already won over." Carl also noted that most, if not all, civil society organizations in Iran needed the regime's blessing to operate. Collaborating with Iranian NGOs usually meant semi-official cooperation with the Iranian Government. Carl said that, while this should not discourage outreach activity, it often made it difficult for the EC to identify legitimate Iranian partners for programs.

McCaw